

does not extend so far down upon the breast. The under wing-coverts are rufous brown, whereas those of *P. aglaia* are black and white.

The black of the head and neck is separated from the plumbeous of the back by a narrow line of ash-colour; and the ears are tinged with purple. Beneath, this species is much lighter than *P. aglaia*, being ashy white.

The tail is brown, edged with ash—but emarginate, whilst that of *P. aglaia* is round.

The specimen from which the description is taken is an adult male, received by M. Verreaux from Mexico, in 1858. The female has not yet, to my knowledge, been met with. I give below a measurement of the two species.

<i>P. aglaia.</i>		<i>P. affinis.</i>	
Length	7·00	Length	6·00
Wing	3·60	Wing	3·45
Tail	3·30	Tail	2·90
Tarsus	1·00	Tarsus	·82
Middle toe	·60	Middle toe	·55
Bill above	·68	Bill above	·50
„ along gape	·95	„ along gape	·65
Width of bill at nostrils	·40	Width of bill at nostrils	·30

XXXIX.—*On the Habits of the Black-winged Stilt, as observed on its occurrence in Sussex.* By A. E. KNOX.

ON the 17th of May last, a specimen of the Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus melanopterus*) was killed on the banks of a small pond about a mile from this place, in a partially enclosed district surrounded by unreclaimed moorland, near the junction of Midhurst and Bepton commons.

This is the first time that the Stilt has ever been obtained or seen in the county of Sussex; and it would appear to be nearly equally scarce in all parts of the British Islands.

Opportunities for observing the habits and manners of these rare and accidental visitors so seldom occur, that I shall make no apology for the length of this communication. Apart, however, from the rarity of the species, there are circumstances

attending the occurrence of the individual in question which appear to me to be especially worthy of notice, as tending to throw some light on its remarkable, and, to the ordinary observer, grotesque external conformation.

The pond to which I have alluded is very shallow—the depth of the water, even at fifteen paces from the shore, scarcely exceeding a foot. About that distance from the banks, the surface was covered with numerous blossoms of the Water Crowfoot (*Ranunculus aquatilis*). On examining these next day, and frequently afterwards during last month, I found them inhabited by numerous minute Dipterous and Coleopterous insects (small flies, midges, and beetles), comfortably nestled at the bottom of the flowers among the stamens, from which, indeed, none but the most delicate and attenuated instrument would be capable of extracting them without at the same time injuring the blossoms. Now, not one of our wading or swimming birds, except the Stilt, possesses a beak perfectly adapted to this purpose. But the Stilt has a bill almost as finely pointed as that of a Humming-bird; and those which make the nearest approach to it, as some among the smaller *Tringa*, want the accompaniment of length of limb—that unusual development of *tibia* and *tarsus*—to enable them to wade to a sufficient distance from the shore.

The bird was first noticed by an intelligent lad, the son of a small farmer of the name of Pearson, while driving the cows home to be milked in the evening. It was then standing nearly up to its belly in the water, and rapidly extracting the insects from the flowers, or, as the boy supposed, picking the petals themselves. It allowed him to approach within twenty yards before it took flight, when it extended its long red legs behind it, after the manner of a heron, and, alighting again on the opposite bank, immediately recommenced wading out to the water-plants. Young Pearson then hastened home to his father, who lives at a short distance from the pond; and the latter, hurrying to the spot with a loaded gun, found the bird employed as before among the flowers of the Water Crowfoot. But it was now exceedingly shy and wary of the gun, flying from one side of the pond to the other, before Pearson could get within shot (but never uttering any cry or sound), so that at

last he found it necessary to resort to stratagem, and to endeavour to "stalk" the bird. This a newly made ditch and bank, one extremity of which approached within a few yards of the water's edge, enabled him to do successfully. On raising his head above the bank, just before he fired, he perceived the Stilt within twenty yards of him, knee-deep in the water, in the midst of a cloud of gnats and midges, at which he was snapping right and left, much after the manner (to use Pearson's own simile) of a dog when teased by the flies in hot weather.

The bird, fortunately but little injured by the shot, was brought to me on the following morning, and on subsequent dissection proved to be a female. The ovarium contained several eggs, the largest of which was about the size of a pea. The stomach was crammed with beetles and gnats in a half-digested state, the *elytra* of the former showing that different species had been captured. After the first pleasurable sensations on possessing and examining in the flesh a perfect specimen of so rare a visitor had passed away, I could not help being struck with the remarkable tenuity of the tips of the mandibles, as well as by the more obvious peculiarity from which the bird has derived its name (the extraordinary length of its legs); but after listening to the simple story of George Pearson and his son, I perceived that the mystery was solved, and that here was a new instance of the wonderful adaptation of means to an end, of structure to habits, such interesting examples of which are continually presenting themselves to the observant naturalist.

XL.—Note on the Breeding and Mode of Capture of the Short-tailed Petrel, or Mutton Bird (Puffinus obscurus), in the islands in Bass's Straits. From the Journal of ROBERT ELWES.

THE little settlement on Vansittart's or Gun-carriage Island, one of the Flinders's Islands group in Bass's Straits, lies in a cove, on one side sandy, but on the other closed in by huge granite rocks, behind which the sealers have built their houses, and which serve also to shelter their boats from the sea. Tucker's (the chief settler's) house was comfortable enough. His wife